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GERMANY'S ELECTION: AMERICA'S OPPORTUNITY

by William Henry Chamberlin

The outcome of the recent German election affords an opportunity for the United States, Great Britain and France to conclude with the majority of the German people a genuine peace settlement bringing Germany definitely into the Western camp in the cold war. This may be the last opportunity of its kind.

The tragedy of the twenty years' armistice between the two wars was that when Germany was reasonable France was not, and vice versa. Had half the concessions, which Hitler later snatched by force, been made to the appeals of European-minded men like Stresemann and Bruening, the twin tragedies of the Third Reich and World War II might well have been avoided. This lesson should surely be remembered at a time when, more as a result of Soviet ruthlessness than of Western diplomatic skill, there is every prospect that the first government of the new-fledged West German State will speak a language comprehensible to the West.

The prospective leaders of this government are men like Konrad Adenauer, former burgomaster of Cologne and a veteran leader of the Christian Democratic Union, a right-of-center grouping supported by the Catholic and Protestant churches; Dr. Theodore Heuss, veteran liberal and leader of the Free Democratic Party; and Professor Ludwig Erhard. The latter shaped German economic policy, during the last year of recovery and progress, along lines far removed from the collectivism that is sometimes endorsed as the sole remedy for Europe's ills.

These men and their like-minded colleagues will be responsive to every move from Washington, London or Paris that looks toward the closer integration of Germany with the European community of nations, to the advantage of both. They are alive (as most Germans seem to be) to the threat of Eastern totalitarianism. They are men who share those ideals of Western solidarity which official spokesmen of the United States, Great Britain and France are continually announcing as their own.

The German election, therefore, represents a golden diplomatic opportunity for the Western Powers to achieve a negotiated settlement with a responsible German government. If this opportunity is neglected or postponed too long, the moderate and reasonable men who will be the first Ministers of the new West German Cabinet will be pushed aside, or will lack sufficient prestige and authority to commit their country to

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any permanent binding arrangements. If full advantage is to be taken of this opportunity, a change of spirit must accompany the change in shape of the military occupation, symbolized by the substitution of civilian High Commissioners for Generals.

II

The results of the German election of August 14 have banished three dangers which might have represented serious handicaps for the revival of German parliamentary government. First, the turnout of more than 75 per cent of the qualified voters gives the new Parliament an authority it would have lacked if there had been widespread abstention at the polls, either from apathy, or as a deliberate silent protest.

Second, there has been no mandate for socialization of industry. The Social Democrats, whose program is similar to that of the British Labor Party, emerged from the election a strong minority, but definitely a minority, with about 30 per cent of the votes. The issue of free economy against planned economy (or more accurately, perhaps, between less or more governmental planning and controls) was one of the most clear-cut and important in the election.

A typical Social Democratic campaign poster read: "All the millionaires will vote CDU. But you, millions of toilers, vote Social Democratic." Socialist election speeches and leaflets attacked the "unsocial" policy of Erhard, the uneven distribution of income, the permission to build movies and stores during a housing shortage.

The CDU retorted with leaflets showing the contrast in conditions before and after the currency reform, pointing to the substantial increases in meat and fat rations; the improvement in public transportation facilities; the elimination of the primitive post-war barter for food and other essentials of life. So far as one may judge from the election returns, the majority of the voters were more impressed by the progress achieved than by the Socialist criticisms and promises.

Finally, the voters of Western Germany have impressively repudiated Communism. With only a little over five per cent of the vote, Communism has shown itself weaker in Western Germany than in France or Italy. In its 30 years as a political force the Communist Party in Germany has never before made such a feeble showing in a free election.

III

Soviet policy, which is sometimes overpraised on the score of cleverness, has been the principal factor in discrediting Communism in German eyes. Shortly before the election I met Herbert von Dirksen,

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former German Ambassador in Moscow, Tokyo and London, and his analysis of Soviet post-war policy seems worth repeating:

> "The Kremlin has made three great blunders since the end of the war. American and British good will, which could have been a valuable asset, has been alienated. Soviet imperialism has created much nationalist discontent behind the Iron Curtain, with Tito's revolt as its most spectacular expression. Finally the Russian chance to win German sympathy and support has been lost by the excesses of the Red Army and by the ruthless oppression and exploitation of the Soviet zone."

Communist propaganda, both in the Western and in the Soviet zones of occupation, has been pitched in a nationalist key. There has been little talk of social revolution and much emphasis on German unity and on German grievances against the Western Powers.

The handicap for this kind of propaganda is that everything which can be said against the Western Powers can be said much more emphatically of the Russians, against whose activities, of course, the German Communists never utter a word. Dismantling in the Soviet zone has been even more extensive and ruinous than in the Ruhr. The Soviet zone, with something less than one third of the population of the Western zones, is obliged to pay an equal amount in Occupation costs and so-called reparations. And there is, of course, no equivalent in the Soviet zone for the aid of more than one billion dollars which the United States has put into Western Germany during the last year.

The natural result is that the Western part of Germany has gone far ahead of the Eastern part in its standard of living. There are two indisputable facts which probably did more to discredit Communism in the eyes of the German voters than any amount of conscious American or other propaganda. Despite the inhuman overcrowding and appalling housing conditions in the West, there is a steady one-way stream of fugitives from the part of Germany under Russian control. Additionally, in Frankfurt and other West German cities, one sees advertisements of facilities for sending food packages to the Soviet zone.

IV

The new German legislature is composed of two houses, the Bundestag, of some 400 members, selected by the voting of August 14, and the Bundesrat, a smaller upper house, with equal representation from each of the eleven Laender, or states, into which the three Western zones are divided. The new German Constitution, worked out in Bonn after much debate, contains one provision which may serve as a brake on the frequent Cabinet crises and changes which weakened the Weimar Republic.

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The Cabinet, under the new Constitution, need not resign after losing a vote of confidence, unless and until the parties which vote to overthrow the government in office have agreed among themselves as to the make-up of a new Cabinet. This excludes the possibility of purely negative combinations, such as that formed by the Nazis and the Communists as an unholy alliance to wreck the Weimar Republic.

However, it may be doubted whether any such constitutional device will by itself serve to safeguard the new German State. Far more important is the question whether the economic gains of the past year can be held and extended, or whether there will be a relapse into industrial depression and mass unemployment. Equally important is the issue of what the new central government, in co-operation with the Laender, can do to relieve the appalling conditions confronting many millions of German refugees, driven from their homes in Eastern Germany, the Sudetenland and former German communities elsewhere.

The outcome of Western Germany's election is an opportunity for the United States, and for Western Europe. But opportunities must be seized quickly. One step that would immensely strengthen the position of the German moderates would be the immediate unconditional stoppage of all dismantling, except in the case of the few plants adaptable only to military use. The full idiocy of dismantling is vividly reflected in the story of the Schiess heavy machinery plant, dismantled by the British, then rebuilt with American money, because it was found essential to the German economy.

The Western sectors of Berlin should be promptly incorporated in the new State. And some kind of international financial action should be undertaken to help house the refugees, for whose inhuman treatment the Western Powers bear at least some share of responsibility.

Most important of all, perhaps, Germany should be invited and encouraged to play a constructive role in a united federal Europe. The European idea has a tremendous appeal to Germans today. Even those who are most bitter about dismantling and other negative aspects of the Occupation are quick to agree that a closer political, economic and cultural union of the countries immediately west of the Iron Curtain is Germany's best chance for political independence and survival.

Mr. Chamberlin is making a study of current German conditions and was in Frankfurt for the general election on which he reports herewith.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. 6, No. 35

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By Frank C. Hanighen August 31, 1949

SOCIALISM: We do not have the space to deal with all the arguments in the current debate: Is Socialism responsible for Britain's plight? For one thing, there is the protracted discussion as to whether the present system constitutes Socialism. Mr. Geoffrey Crowther, editor of the Economist, calls it "State Capitalism". Incidentally, that is what many economists, including Marxists, call the Soviet regime. What is pertinent to the debate is that a Socialist Government has run Britain for four years with avowed intent to turn the system into what has traditionally been known as Socialism, and has pushed its program of national planning and nationalization of industries as far as it dared. Whether a Conservative Government would have done (or, tomorrow, would do) the same thing under a false rubric of Capitalism is beside the point. Socialism must bear the responsibility.

The historical alibis of the apologists of Socialism are not impressive. They emphasize that British capitalism built up and protected monopolies, hence contributing to the present industrial backwardness. True, but did the present Government take one step to abolish these monopolies? Naturally not, for that Government wants state monopoly; it's easier for the State to take over private monopolies. But wasn't the traditional British system of a viable international balance of payments upset by two wars? True, but the Socialist Government not only did nothing to recreate the formerly essential "invisibles", but actually discouraged their revival. The closing of the Liverpool cotton exchange, former source of "invisible" revenue, is an example. In short the British Socialist Government did -- had to do, in accordance with its Socialist concepts -- the things which prevent the United Kingdom from recapturing its former existence as a going economic concern.

As a matter of fact, the Socialist Government started out with an advantage enjoyed by no other young Socialist government in the world. It received a large gift of dollars, donated by our comparatively free enterprise system. In 1917, Lenin's government far from touching such a bounty, was blacklisted and warred upon. And that brings up a thought-provoking train of recollection. Some years ago, when many "liberals" finally admitted that the Soviet Union not only had not produced Utopia, but had actually inaugurated the world's greatest tyranny, these "liberals" offered the following apologia. Marx never envisaged, they said, the attempt to establish Socialism in an economically and politically backward country like Russia. Socialism could only receive a fair trial in a land which had reached an advanced industrial and political stage. Well, the United Kingdom which is the "Mother of Parliaments" possesses skills and capital equipment only second to that of the United States. These priceless heritages, whatever their shortcomings, have been completely at the service of the Attlee Government for four years. What more do the defenders of Socialism want, now, when the British setup of Socialism -- as ideal as humanly possible in the conditions of its birth -- faces complete bankruptcy?

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BRITAIN TALKS BACK: Harsh cries of protest from some sections of the British press and bitter attacks on Uncle Sam have greeted such criticisms of the workings of British Socialism as Mr. E. T. Leech's fine series in the Scripps-Howard papers.

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Yet many Americans are doubtless unaware of the no less fervid applause of such American reportage in the conservative British papers. Indeed, we have found one London publication, Truth, which criticizes Americans for praising the British Government. In its June 17 number, Truth says: "I daresay that Mr. Lewis Douglas, the American Ambassador in London, would be startled and outraged to hear himself compared, however remotely, to Benedict Arnold. So would Mr. Averell Harriman. So would Mr. Thomas K. Finletter the United States Minister now administering Marshall aid in London. . . . Objectively (as the Communists would say), Mr. Douglas and his two colleagues are -- however unconsciously -- betraying the American way of life. They are betraying the free enterprise system on which the United States is based. They are giving aid and comfort to the enemies of that system; and they are doing so not at all from any unworthy motive but because of credulity and ignorance. Mr. Douglas, Mr. Harriman and Mr. Finletter have now become three of the principal assets of the British Socialist Party. To judge from their public utterances they take their inspiration not from the United States but from the Socialist headquarters at Transport House. They are like a ventriloquist's dolls, Mr. Herbert Morrison's Charlie McCarthys.

"In the last 12 months these three innocent gentlemen have provided a whole series of unsolicited testimonials to British Socialism. . . . Their utterances could not be more useful, from the Socialist point of view, if Mr. Morrison had written them himself. . . . If there is any gratitude in politics and the Socialists win the next election, Mr. Attlee should celebrate the victory by offering peerages to Mr. Douglas, Mr. Harriman and Mr. Finletter. No men will have done more to earn them."

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GOP: Something should be done about Dewey -- is the way many Republicans are talking. For instance, the New York Governor has not indicated his preference for Senatorial nominee in the Empire State next November. But it is known that he does not want it to be the only political figure the Republican politicos believe can win. That is Lieutenant Governor Joe Hanley, whom the Governor wants to keep with him as a big political asset. Incumbent Senator John Foster Dulles, it is believed, is simply not well enough known. But Hanley is widely popular and could get out the vote. In connection with this Senatorial race, politicos like to laugh over Representative Kingsland Macy's letter to the Governor, urging him to run for Senator himself. Macy showed clearly that he, like so many others, simply wanted to remove the Governor from New York state politics.

As a matter of fact, Republican leaders wistfully wonder if there is some way to take Dewey out of national politics; especially after the recent meeting of the National Committee in Washington, at which Guy Gabrielson of New Jersey was elected Chairman by a narrow majority. The deportment of the Dewey forces, it is remarked, was typical of his role in the party. Gabrielson had the necessary votes for election before the Committee gathered in the Capital. The stage seemed set for harmony and a unanimous vote for the New Jersey man. There was one sincere dissent -- some quite justifiably felt that an outstanding Midwesterner should be National Chairman. But the one man who would fill this bill was Harry Darby of Kansas, and he absolutely refused to consider the job.

Despite this situation which called for Gabrielson and harmony, the Dewey forces went to work to find just anyone who might rally the Midwesterners and "stop Gabrielson". Every possible stratagem was used -- even "smear tactics" were employed to this end. In desperation, the Dewey-ites finally hit upon the idea of supporting Beck of South Dakota. Beck was quite unfitted for the job because he has had little experience in politics. The upshot was a narrow margin for Gabrielson, who may not be ideal, but was the best possible selection. The narrow margin, which closely approximated the contest at Omaha last winter may therefore give the impression that the party is still split as badly as in January. But those who watched

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the recent battle in Washington believe that it is no longer split between "me too" forces and regulars, but only between the latter and what some call the Dewey "fifth column". If that view is correct, the GOP is in better condition basically than it seems to be.

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VAUGHAN: Having listened, in years past, to the disparaging remarks about General "Pa" Watson, Roosevelt's aide, we cannot develop an intense interest in the exposure of General Vaughan. The favor-granting aspect of our great social revolution of the past 17 years is no novelty by this time; and from the practical political standpoint the Republicans may exult prematurely. Harry Truman might actually stand to gain in popularity, for we hear some folks say admiringly, "He certainly sticks by a friend." However, we do find the presence and proclivities of Vaughan satisfyingly "in character", in surveying the picture of the handout State as now administered. Vaughan's personality as well as his tireless efforts in behalf of friends gives one the "feel" of what we imagine an Odd Fellows lodge must be. (A learned friend reproves us; says Vaughan is a Mason -- and York Rite, not Scottish Rite.)

For instance, there is a charming bit of Vaughaniana which unaccountably has missed the press. It concerns one Louis Renfrow, a dentist friend of Vaughan; naturally, from Missouri. The war found Renfrow in the Dental Corps and he rose rapidly to the rank of colonel. When Vaughan manfully shouldered his duties in the White House, he discovered he needed an assistant. Colonel Renfrow, accordingly, became Assistant Military Aide. Renfrow, however, was a man of ambition, and so blossomed in his breast the yearning to exchange the "chickens" on his shoulders for the stars of a general. Unfortunately tradition blocked his path. A colonelcy is the highest rank obtainable in the Dental Corps -- why we don't know. Doctors of medicine may hope to become generals, but not doctors of oral surgery.

Anyway, when Louis Johnson took over as Secretary of Defense, Renfrow became one of his secretaries. Of course, it may have been only an accident that Vaughan had been one of the first and strongest boosters for Louis Johnson as Defense head. The spot which Renfrow occupies in the Pentagon is by no means negligible; Defense press relations informs us that the former dentist is in charge of the Secretary's appointments -- meaning the Johnson calling list. It was only logical, therefore, that such importance, and such ambition, should receive its reward. Last week, it was announced that Colonel Renfrow was promoted to the rank of brigadier general. He can therefore wear that star -- subject of course to the approval of Congress.

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CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS: It is ironical that, among the many protests against the confirmation of Tom Clark for the Supreme Court post, little publicity was given to one of his real and most grievous faults. Clark, in our opinion, moved all too gently and haltingly against real subversives and was assailed by the Left for what paltry efforts he did make in dealing with these offenders. On the other hand, his Department of Justice has tyrannically proceeded against conscientious objectors, most of whom are in the "religious" category of that class. From any reasonable point of view, it seems outrageous that prosecutions are continuing against a number of Quaker objectors today, and that ten men were sent to prison in the months of June and July. Although Selective Service has long since ceased to draft men for the armed services, there are more young C.O.'s in jail today than at any time since the Department started the prosecutions. Mr. Clark turned a deaf ear to those who have urged an end to this situation. It is to be hoped that Attorney General McGrath will now take steps to stop the current prosecutions, to secure immediate and unconditional freedom for these men and to practice real tolerance toward those whose consciences sincerely prompt them not to take up arms. The Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, 2006 Walnut Street, Philadelphia 3, Pennsylvania, is organizing appeals to the President and the Attorney General.

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Book Events

Ortega y Gasset: Existentialist, by José Sanchez Villasenor, S. J. Translated from the Spanish by Joseph Small, S. J. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company. $3.00. Reviewed by J. M. Lalley.

At one of the recent sessions of the Goethe festival at Aspen, Colorado, Don José Ortega y Gasset observed that Western mankind, which has lived upon a succession of cosmic illusions, is about to embrace another. This time, he said, it will be "the illusion of being disillusioned". The phrase pretty well describes both Ortega's own philosophy of historical vitalism and the new gospel of existentialism that has already become the fashionable cult of the literary avant-garde. Ortega's name has never been as closely associated with the doctrines of this cult as that of his late and equally famous compatriot, Miguel de Unamuno. But Father Sanchez is at some pains to demonstrate that, for all their deceptive differences of style and temper, the urbane and cosmopolitan Ortega and the rude and vehement Unamuno have an intimate kinship of thought. Ortega, certainly, has been one of the most representative and influential minds of his age. Evidently it was for this reason that Father Sanchez, a young Mexican Jesuit who sees in existentialism the teleological fulfillment of all modern European philosophy, has chosen the intellectual case history of Ortega to prove his point. Because Ortega has been responsive to all barometric changes of the ideological climate, sensitive to every slightest shifting of the winds of doctrine, he becomes for his critic the exemplar, par exellence, of the modern genius. His serenity of style and a loftiness of thought, it seems, merely mask a profound spiritual agitation and uncertainty.

The formative influences in Ortega's thought were German rather than Latin. For him the German intellectual atmosphere that prevailed before 1914 was pretty much what the Mediterranean landscape was for his prototype Goethe. His dominant motif is the song of Mignon in reverse. Ortega's point of departure is the post-Kantian idealism in which he was steeped at his German universities, where he was, however, simultaneously enticed by the Nietzschean doctrine of the superman, by the positivism of the French rationalists, by the instinctualism of Bergson and especially by the historicism of Wilhelm Dilthey, which was to find fruition in the work of Oswald Spengler. Thus Ortega has oscillated between the rational and the irrational, between the intellect and instinct, between idealism and relativism, ultimately seeking to resolve his doubts by the doctrine of life as the supreme test of validity. Philosophy becomes merely the "history of errors". It was necessary, however, for other ages to make these errors "in order that our own might be able to avoid them".

Father Sanchez' analysis of the systems of thought having a common origin in the idealistic separation of life and thought and a common terminus in existentialism is acute and penetrating. He writes of course from an Aristotelian and Thomistic perspective, and like Maritain he traces the germination of the modern heresy to the abstract intellectualism of Descartes. In this context existentialism becomes an assertion of the importance of life even at the expense of reason. The political consequences of the divorce of life and reason, and of the rootless culture produced by it, were set forth in the famous Revolt of the Masses; but Father Sanchez accuses Ortega of unwillingness to recognize that barbarism is also the corollary of his vitalism. Nevertheless, the net effect of the book is to enhance Ortega's stature as a creative thinker; for in this country at any rate he has hitherto been regarded rather in the light of a broker of ideas; as a kind of inspired middleman.

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